

## Spokane VAMC Uses VA Direct for a "Higher Purpose": Providing Better Service to VA Patients

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As Jason Johnson nears his fifth year as medical assistant supervisor for the Office of Integrated Veteran Care (IVC), He says he is passionate about the service his team provides to Veterans at the VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Spokane, Washington. "My role now is not just a job. It has a higher purpose because you're dealing with Veterans. You're dealing with patient care. What we do directly impacts Veterans, and it's personal to me."

Johnson explains that VA Direct Messaging allows the Spokane VAMC team to approve processes, informational flow, and any other elements related to the Veteran's care, like a referral packet or even a Request for Services (RFS).

Johnson is impressed with VA Direct's capabilities, saying "Wow! I can get that referral packet in an instant." If there is an issue that needs to be handled, he can send a reply and receive follow-up notes. If a Veteran needs an urgent RFS, providers can send those to be immediately downloaded for action. He explained that when faxes may or may not be working, the participating external partners/providers are "on pins and needles calling us, 'Did you get it? Did you get it?' Maybe it's coming. Maybe it's stuck in a queue."

Continuing to rely on faxes makes it difficult to know the status of documents, Johnson explained. He says the willingness to adopt the new system will improve the coordination of patient care. "We've seen it firsthand," Johnson explained. The Spokane IVC staff has now implemented the use of VA Direct and is willing to talk to a participating external partner/provider "who's frustrated by faxes," and explain to them the benefits of using VA Direct, likely leading to a wider adoption of the platform.

The Spokane VAMC receives several hundred new referrals each day. They say the greater the number of participating external partners/providers that have VA Direct, the faster the referral process is going to be. Referrals often require follow-ups on details, and VA Direct surpasses the previous methods like phone calls, phone trees, or faxes.

With VA Direct, "a provider can find that message, [process] it, and that referral is done ... which allows us to process more referrals every day [...] and give Veterans the care they need," Johnson said. "It all boils down to getting Veterans care in a more timely fashion, whether it's routine or urgent." With VA Direct, wait time can be reduced substantially. We can provide

Veterans with peace of mind, getting “them scheduled and eliminating that stress,” Johnson said. “We’re talking about lives being impacted.”

For more on VA Direct Messaging, contact [VADirectInfo@va.gov](mailto:VADirectInfo@va.gov).